

August 16, 2001

Steven Angelo
Town Manager
Saugus Town Hall
298 Central Street
Saugus, MA. 01906

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SAUGUS, MA 01906

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Dear Mr. Angelo:

Enclosed for your review please find the final report of the Special Resco Task Force. This Task Force as created by you, was asked to explore the feasibility of creating a health study that would address the specific impact of the Resco Incinerator on the public health in the Town of Saugus.

The members of the Task Force included Richard Barry, Ronald Jepson, Bruce Manning, David Berkowitch, Pamela Harris and a member of the Saugus Board of Health.

The conclusions reached by this committee are based on extensive data gathered from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Bureau of Environmental Health Assessment as well as from the Massachusetts Cancer Registry.

On behalf of the Task Force I urge you to carefully consider the recommendations as presented in this final report. Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions.

Thank you for your attention in this matter.

Very truly yours,

**Maureen P. Dever
Chairperson**

FINAL REPORT OF THE SPECIAL RESCO TASK FORCE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION:

Since its inception this Task Force has been able to observe the following:

- It is not financially or scientifically feasible to conduct a public health study that would be capable of determining the specific impact of the RESCO incinerator on the public health in the Town of Saugus.
- The Town of Saugus continues to have elevated cancer rates as measured by the Massachusetts Cancer registry. These elevated cancer rates remain statistically significant in the two most recent data updates that conclude with 1997 statistics.
- RESCO emits known toxins and carcinogens. During the year 2000, the carcinogenic nature of dioxins and the neuro-toxicity of mercury have been further affirmed.
- The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection has, as a matter of public policy, determined that solid waste combustion will not be used to deal with Massachusetts solid waste. While expansion of solid waste landfills will be permitted, it is clear that the current moratorium on the construction and expansion of incinerators will continue.
- If ever the Commonwealth entertains a petition from RESCO to expand burning capacity the Saugus Board of Health would have the statutory authority to make a determination as to whether or not the known risks of additional combustion would be acceptable.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The Town of Saugus, under the initiation of the Selectmen and Manager, should develop both short and long-term public health policies. A clear community statement on public health policy would put forth core public health values and help guide decision making. The Saugus Board of Health could guide the development of such policy and request necessary resources to help develop such policy. Such policy would include the following:
 1. Community awareness of the current state of public health in Saugus. Known data, such as Cancer Registry data, should be disseminated with recommendations similar to existing efforts by the MWRA with respect to lead in drinking water.
 2. Gathering and updating of baseline data more comprehensive than Cancer Registry information could include identification of vulnerable populations of

residents including children, institutionalized adults and other soci-economic indices.

3. Updating applicable zoning by-laws to reflect and link to public health issues.

In the early Spring of the year 2000, Approx. May, it became common knowledge in the Town of Saugus that RESCO had publicly emerged with a strategy to aggressively pursue the approval of the installation of a third burner at the RESCO Facility. It also became common knowledge that if successful RESCO would be seeking a contract with the city of Boston for the purpose of burning 1500 tons of Boston rubbish per day.

Following up on the foregoing information, two neighborhood informative meetings were held in the East Saugus area. A large group of neighbors attended both meetings and universally expressed strong displeasure at the prospect of a third burner installation. Health problems covered the main area of concern with strong feelings being expressed about beliefs that major health problems were already an item of worry as they related to the operation of the RESCO operation as it stands at the present time.

As a result of these meetings and the expressed overwhelming concern of the residents about present health problems mainly in the East Saugus area but also the Town in general, the RESCO Task Force was created. Although there was no stated or written "mission" or "charge" given to the committee, it was quite clear that the main mission of the committee was to try and clearly establish, what the past and present health effect the RESCO facility has had on Saugus public health. Additionally, the Task Force set out to identify what new public health burdens would be placed on residents as a result of an third burner expansion at RESCO.

The newly formed committee met for the first time on June 8th, 2000 and elected Maureen Dever as Chairperson and Richard Barry as Vice-Chairman, Bruce Manning of RESCO, Peter Manoogian (who later resigned), David Berkowitch, Ronald Jepson, Pam Harris and Louise Bucchicre as the Board of Health Representative. At several meeting Joe Vinard would represent the Board of Health. Although initially appointed by the town Manager, Christy Serino was unable to attend after the initial meeting.

In its initial effort, the committee consulted with Dr. Ted Schettler, Science Director for the Science and Environmental Health Network and Co-Chair of the Human Health and environment Project of the Greater Boston Physicians for Social Responsibility. Dr. Schettler was well qualified to advise the Task Force. He holds a Medical degree from Case-Western Reserve University and a Masters Degree in Public Health from the Harvard School of Public Health. He has worked extensively with community groups and non-government organizations throughout the U.S. and the Philippines, addressing the health effects of environmental contamination and toxic exposure.

Dr. Schettler offered his thoughts on the feasibility of coming up with a health study report that was meaningful to the community. He advised that:

- *It was highly unlikely that any study would find adverse health impacts that could be directly linked to a specific incinerator*
- *Conducting such a study is a waste of time and resources.*

His reasoning was explained to us. Epidemiological studies have important limitations because they must first examine a population of suitable size in order to have the study power to detect a significant risk. Exposure in this kind of study is never more than a "best guess." In the best of all possible worlds, one would know with certainty the magnitude of exposure of each resident of Saugus from the incinerator, including all pathways (air, food, skin). These exposures could then be matched to health status to see whether or not there was a correlation. Unfortunately, in a retrospective study, such as the type we were contemplating, this is impossible to know. Consequently, certain assumptions are made and surrogates for exposure are used, such as residential proximity to the incinerator. However, many factors influence what individuals are exposed to during a day, month, or year. Weather patterns, dietary habits, occupational or home exposures among others are important factors. Considering these details makes the study extraordinary cumbersome, expensive and time consuming. In the end, the exposure classification remains a "best guess."

Financing for our study was also pursued with little or no success. It was initially assumed that the cost of a substantial meaningful study would be quite expensive and could very readily exceed \$100,000. Observations made at a Town Meeting held during our time table seemed to clearly indicate that it would not be proper for RESCO to fund the study and considering that Town Meeting had raised Water Rates and was facing funding for future major school construction, grants and funding from outside Institutions should be pursued. Jean Delios was contacted in her position of Community Development and she advised that she was not aware of applicable grants or available funds. Maureen Dever in her role as Chairperson also made inquiries on the availability of funds with various outside groups with little success.

The committee did hold a number of public posted monthly meetings, which did produce substantial miscellaneous information, but nothing that would enable us to fulfill our perceived mission. Attendance by members of the general public at these meetings was negligible. We did plan to hold one session for input from the general public but based on the fact our meetings were poorly attended, an additional meeting for this purpose did not appear to be in order.

At our last meeting for the year 2000, the Committee started to reflect on all of the foregoing information and came to the conclusion we were on a road to nowhere and our mission was not attainable. Solid medical advice had told us that the definitive Health Study we were attempting to undertake was not feasible and a number of the supporting reasons have been outlined in the foregoing text. The time had come for the Committee to issue a final report and disband.

Because we could not accomplish our original intended goal, it is therefore not possible for us to issue a report that clearly defines what is the present health effect on the residents of Saugus caused by the RESCO facility and what would be the additional damage caused by a third burner? It should however be noted that we did make a number of observations and obtain various facts that should be brought forward to the community.

SIGNIFICANT FACTS DISCUSSED AT TASK FORCE MEETINGS

1. The EPA states that dioxin is a cancer causing agent. Dioxin is practically impossible to avoid. Emissions from incinerator smokestacks EPA reports indicate are a leading cause of dioxin pollution. Environmental exposure over a period of time contributed to increased cases of cancer, respiratory disorders and birth defects as well as a host of other ailments. The rain in New England contains up to four times the level of mercury that the federal government considers safe for aquatic life. Coal burning power plants, trash incinerators and other industrial sources in New England spew 35,000 pounds of mercury into the air each year.
2. RESCO currently processes 1,500 tons of solid waste per day. From the trash processed 300 tons of toxic ash are left to be buried in the adjacent ~~that~~ ^{LANDFILL} RESCO officials admit are not legally up to standards set by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection. These standards require that a toxic landfill be covered each day, and that a landfill such as Saugus be doubly lined by an impermeable substance. RESCO's landfills are covered once each week and they are only slurry lined which means the liner is more vulnerable to leaks over time. These leaks allow the toxins to leach into our ground water and from there directly into our food chain. The ash piles from a third burner would reach a height of 90 feet.
3. RESCO has two burners each producing 430 pounds of airborne mercury alone annually. With a third burner, this would increase to 1290 lbs. of Mercury. According to a panel of experts gathered at a recent local forum, mercury is just one of 192 compounds emitted by solid waste incinerators. Yet mercury is considered one of the most dangerous because it accumulates in organic tissues and can remain in the atmosphere for up to three years. At the same forum, Dr. Jill Stein of Greater Boston Physicians for Social responsibility said that mercury has been shown to cause damage to the nervous system resulting in blindness, brain damage and slowed development among children. According to Stein, mercury exposure is most dangerous for pregnant women and their unborn children. Mercury poisoning is a key health and environmental issue in New England. In Massachusetts fish in more than 80 lakes and ponds are considered contaminated. The element is usually released in the air through coal-fired power plants and trash. Most of the mercury released by incinerators comes from batteries, fluorescent lamps, thermostats and other consumer products burned in the plants.
4. Unlike most if not all "host" communities, Saugus has both the incinerator and the ash landfill. Hundreds of industrially zoned acres used to receive incinerator ash receive a unique tax advantage as a result of a previous amended tax agreement with the Town.
5. Saugus has statistically significant high levels of lung cancer, cancer of the pancreas, bladder cancer, Hodgkin's disease and all cancers according to the most recent figures maintained by the Massachusetts Cancer Registry.

6. Dioxins emitted from garbage incinerators pose 10 times the cancer risk as previously believed according to the U.S Environmental Protection Agency. Exposure to dioxin occurs over a lifetime and the danger is a function of this accumulation.
7. Heavy metals can escape the incineration process as well as pollution control equipment only to "bind" on the fresh ash particulate that becomes airborne and can easily enter the deepest area of the lungs.
8. On a hot summer day, too often the sweet odor of fermenting garbage can readily be smelled in the East Saugus area. The Board of Health confirmed that these complaints continue in spite of recent RESCO upgrades.
9. According to RESCO Plant Manager Jim McIver, RESCO in 1999 emitted 870 tons of nitrogen oxide, 180 tons of sculpture dioxide and 372 pounds of mercury.
10. By adding a third burner, RESCO stands to process 50% more trash. AT \$85 per ton, with an additional 750 tons being burnt every day, it means grossing an extra \$63,750 a day at an incinerator plant and ash landfill complex that is already, the largest in the United States.